

# DAILY BULLETIN

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## INDIAN OCEAN WARNING SYSTEM RISES ON INTERNATIONAL AGENDA

Meeting to consider national systems, international coordination center

By Cheryl Pellerin  
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The need for an Indian Ocean tsunami early warning system and the importance of disaster reduction have soared on the international agenda in the weeks since the catastrophic tsunami that claimed more than 150,000 victims.

That development has heightened the importance of the upcoming World Conference on Disaster Reduction being held in Kobe, Japan, January 18-22 and added new urgency to the technical and scientific tasks of building an Indian Ocean early warning system for earthquakes and tsunamis.

"The conference could not be better timed, given the horrendous humanitarian disaster caused by the tsunami," said Mark Lagon, deputy assistant secretary of state for international organization affairs and deputy head of the U.S. delegation to the Kobe meeting. "There will no doubt be discussion at this Kobe conference of early warning systems for tsunamis."

A high-level meeting in Jakarta, Indonesia, January 6 resolved that an early warning system should be established as a matter of urgency, according to a statement by Salvano Briceño, director of the secretariat for the U.N. International Strategy for Disaster Reduction.

Experts say technical elements of a regional early warning system could cost about \$20 million and with international cooperation could be put in place in less than a year.

“We are not starting from scratch,” Briceño said. “Risk maps are already available and many countries in the Indian Ocean have early warning systems for other types of natural hazards such as floods and cyclones. Existing international warning organizations already detect earthquakes and connect relevant authorities with each other.”

In the United States, Lagon said, “President Bush has said that we are going to develop and share plans for expanding existing technical capability for early warning about tsunamis. Such a system would cover not just the Pacific, not just the Indian Ocean, but would offer a broad early warning capability multilaterally,” he said.

In a January 10 meeting with Secretary of State Colin Powell and Administrator Andrew Natsios of the U.S. Agency for International Development, President Bush indicated that the United States is eager to participate in discussions about proposals for an Indian Ocean tsunami early warning system.

Lagon said the Japanese government, which is hosting the Kobe conference, has asked that a segment of the conference be devoted to the subject of tsunami early warning in light of the recent catastrophe.

At the meeting, a thematic session will take place January 19 and cover tsunami disaster mitigation in the Indian Ocean, according to the meeting agenda. Koichiro Matsuura, director-general of the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) will open the session, which will review tsunami early warning systems in the Pacific Ocean and discuss establishing a tsunami early warning system that consists of national systems operated by individual countries and an international support center for the Indian Ocean region.

A January 20 session on the tsunami disaster will bring Jan Egeland, U.N. under secretary-general for humanitarian affairs, together with senior government officials from affected nations and other countries to consider issues related to early warning systems and discuss regional and global lessons.

A January 22 technical session organized by UNESCO and the World Meteorological Organization will examine

how effective mechanisms can be developed and how to build on existing facilities.

The details of an Indian Ocean early warning system are undecided, but many countries are seeking to contribute to the effort.

“This is a case where partnerships are really crucial,” said Lagon. “There are key stakeholders. Japan and Australia are very interested in the tsunami [recovery] and are making generous contributions of their key players. The Germans are very eager to be involved in the development of a tsunami early warning system.”

UNESCO, he added, already has the beginnings of an early warning system, mainly focused on the Pacific Ocean area.

“The U.N. Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) is doing technical work on that system, so they would be partners with the United States to expand that capacity geographically,” Lagon said. “We would work with UNESCO’s IOC to build on that capacity.”

In a January 10 digital video briefing with Turkish journalists and scientists, David Applegate, senior science adviser for earthquake and geological hazards at the U.S. Geological Survey, discussed the technology available for tsunami warning systems.

“The first step is to have seismic networks in place to pick up the initial signal of the earthquake that could generate a tsunami,” he said, “and that can be done with two different methods. One is through tide gauges that are available in real time with satellite telemetry, which is key in all of this. Tide gauges are sort of the first oceanic line of the warning system.”

Second, he said, is a series of ocean buoys. The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) operates six buoys off the coast of Alaska and the Pacific Northwest that can pick up the higher pressures of tsunami waves coming across the open ocean. Such technology has only been operational in the Pacific Ocean since 2001, he said.

“But the most important part of any tsunami warning center really isn’t the technology that detects these things, it’s the technology that gets the message out,” Applegate said. “And then even more important is public education that has to go on beforehand, so if such a

warning is issued, people know what to do and where to go to be safe.”

A critical component of any early warning system, he said, “is assessment work that allows researchers to understand where tsunamis have struck in the past, to understand the bathymetry [water depth measurement] and topography of the coastline and how far the inundation is likely to go inland, and therefore where people can safely evacuate.”

In Kobe next week, the State Department’s Ambassador to Japan Howard Baker will lead the U.S. delegation, which will include representatives from the president’s National Science and Technology Council, the U.S. Agency for International Development, NOAA, the U.S. Geological Survey, the National Science Foundation, NASA, several U.S. embassies, the Department of Transportation and the Department of Health and Human Services.

Even before the tsunami, Lagon said, the United States was a major partner in an effort to work with the United Nations and the Japanese hosts to reduce risks before disasters strike -- “in particular,” he said, “getting third world countries to harden their infrastructures and invest in their own futures by preparing for such disasters.”

The United States has important resources to offer, especially scientific capability, Lagon said. “Whether it’s observation from high above the Earth or the technology of buoy systems to see a tsunami coming, the United States is eager to work in concert with other nations. It doesn’t matter where the proposals are made, it matters that the world work together to develop capacities,” he said.

Information about the World Conference on Disaster Reduction is available at  
<http://www.unisdr.org/wcdr/>

## U.S. REMAINS COMMITTED TO ACHIEVING PEACE IN DARFUR, ENVOY SAYS

With North-South accord reached, Danforth says Darfur is “next question”

By Judy Aita

Washington File United Nations Correspondent

United Nations - U.S. Ambassador John Danforth says that “sanctions are still on the table” and the United States will press as intensely to achieve peace in the strife-torn Darfur region of western Sudan as it did to end the North-South conflict.

U.N. Security Council members, pressing for peace in Darfur, said January 11 that sanctions against Sudan are still an option even though a peace agreement has been signed ending the 20-year-old North-South civil war.

Speaking with journalists after a closed door Security Council meeting with U.N. Special Envoy to Sudan Jan Pronk, Danforth said that “it is important for all parties in Darfur -- the government and the rebels -- to understand that there is a limit to tolerance, and the fact of sanctions is still something to be considered.”

Sanctions were discussed during the session, Danforth noted. Even though some council members are opposed to sanctions as a general principle, “it may be possible to fashion” sanctions in a way that would be agreeable to a majority of council members, he said.

“Everything that can be done, should be done,” he added. “We must be focused.”

Danforth said that council members hope the signing of the peace agreement in early January between Khartoum and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) “is going to have a positive effect in respect to Darfur.” That development, along with the presence of African Union troops, who are providing protection for civilians in Darfur, and upcoming changes in the government in Khartoum to include SPLM leader John Garang, are other reasons for optimism, he said.

Before becoming the chief U.S. envoy to the United Nations, Danforth was President Bush’s special envoy to Sudan. As president of the Security Council in November 2004, Danforth arranged for an extraordinary council meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, to focus on the peace talks between the government and the SPLM under way there.

By the conclusion of the session, the two sides agreed to finalize a peace pact by the end of 2004. The deadline was met, and a comprehensive peace agreement was officially signed on January 9, 2005.

The ambassador said that “it is impossible to overstate the importance” of the North-South peace agreement.

“The purpose of the United States’ engagement in Sudan is to save people’s lives, not to make debating points, not to listen to ourselves speak, but to put forward and support ideas that will actually save people’s lives,” Danforth said. “We have certainly done that with respect to the North-South peace agreement.”

That peace agreement, he pointed out, “has ended a war that has lasted more than two decades and that has claimed more than 2 million lives, and people are pushing that off the front page as though nothing had happened last Sunday [January 9]. Something big happened last Sunday and it was due in large part to the engagement of the United States in this process.

“The next question is Darfur, and we should be engaged in that in precisely the same manner, not to make debating points, but to save the lives of people, especially the innocent people.”

In his presentation to the Security Council, U.N. Envoy Pronk said that, “after the conclusion and signing of the comprehensive peace agreement between North and South, there can be no question what should be the priority task for 2005. The fighting in Darfur must be stopped, the conflict must be resolved, and the people affected must be able to return to their homes.”

Pronk said that the North-South peace process can be applied to Darfur and “it must.”

“We can make it work,” he said.

“It is hard to imagine that the peace dividend promised by the Nairobi agreement will be reaped without an end to the suffering in Darfur,” Pronk said. “International aid will not flow and, more important, in Sudan itself, the achievement will turn out to be vulnerable.”

As long as there is war in some part of Sudan, resources will be spent on weapons, not welfare, he said, and “investors will be reluctant, entrepreneurs will hesitate,

young people with brains and initiative will want to leave the country, displaced people will wander around.”

Offering several suggestions that could encourage a peace agreement, Pronk said that the government and rebels in Darfur must be pressured, reasoned with, and offered alternatives to the status quo.

Suggestions included: As a show of good will, the government and rebel movements should all withdraw behind reasonable and well-defined lines with African Union troops moving in to protect the areas; the government should make a new start in disarming the Jingaweit; the rebel movement should agree not to block or disrupt peaceful seasonal movements of nomadic tribes and their cattle; and the parties must identify practical means to provide basic needs such as food to their forces in order to lessen the urge to steal, loot and kill.

The U.N. envoy noted that only about 1,000 of the 3,000 African Union troops have been deployed, and he urged the international community to “do whatever is required to accelerate the rate of deployment.”

“The recent history of Darfur shows that without such an independent and neutral protection force, women and children, elder people, returnees, unarmed persons belonging to an adversary tribe would not be safe,” Pronk said.

Danforth also mentioned the possibility of adding international police protection in the camps, and Pronk suggested that the number of human rights monitors in the region be increased from 20 to 150.

The security situation in Darfur is bad and the humanitarian situation poor, Pronk told the council. Violence has spread into the camps for displaced persons and is directly affecting humanitarian workers as well; refugees are not returning in sufficient numbers to plant sustainable crops; and livestock is being lost on a huge scale, he said.

## CHINA URGED TO REDUCE FRICTION IN TRADE RELATIONSHIP WITH U.S.

Commerce Secretary Evans says U.S. needs to see “demonstrated results”

Chinese leaders must take action to reduce friction in trade relations with the United States, says outgoing Secretary of Commerce Don Evans.

“[P]reserving the continuity of U.S. domestic political support for free trade in general, and the U.S.-China economic relationship in particular, requires movement from China in a number of areas,” Evans told members of the American Chamber of Commerce and the U.S.-China Business Council in Beijing on January 12. He will be in the Chinese capital January 12 and 13, his fourth and last visit there as secretary.

Evans announced his resignation from the Cabinet soon after the November 2004 presidential election. President Bush has nominated Carlos Gutierrez to succeed Evans as secretary of commerce.

Evans told his audience in Beijing that the United States believes that fair competition in open markets creates excellence.

“We willingly compete with countries around the world and ask only that trade take place on even terms,” he said. “All we want is a level playing field.”

The commerce secretary acknowledged that the economic relationship between the United States and China is strong and showing progress, with China the fastest growing market for American exports and investment by Chinese companies in the United States increasing. He praised China’s involvement in international security issues, its advances in satisfying its commitments for membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO), and its cooperation in the

U.S.-China Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade (JCCT).

“Many of us in the United States believe this relationship will continue to produce increased peace, prosperity, and stability in the world,” Evans said.

However, he added, the United States needs to see “demonstrated results” from the Chinese leadership in several critical areas.

“When China’s leaders fail to produce results on the points of friction in our trading relationship, their failure only empowers those critics within the U.S. political system who seek to roll back our level of economic engagement,” Evans said.

China’s fixed exchange rate policy is the greatest source of concern for American businesses and elected officials, according to Evans.

“Market-determined exchange rates are the key to a well-functioning financial system,” he said. “This is the best policy for major economies, including China.”

Evans told the audience that the United States has repeatedly urged the Chinese government to move as soon as possible to a flexible exchange rate. “We will continue to encourage them to do so and we will actively assist the Chinese in their ongoing efforts,” he said.

The commerce secretary also called for greater progress from China in protecting intellectual property rights, liberalizing market access, increasing transparency in government procurement, reducing exclusionary regulations, and strengthening the rule of law.

Evans welcomed China’s aspirations to play a greater role in the global economy and seek “Market Economy Status” in the WTO. But for the United States, he said, such status is more than a label or simple classification.

“The criteria that define Market Economy Status measure a given country’s commitment to empower its citizens by providing them economic freedom,” Evans said. “Countries aspiring to be treated as market economies must end government intervention and allow market forces to drive their economies.”

In closing, Evans reiterated the United States’ commitment to strengthening the economic relationship between the two countries. “We look forward to developing a higher standard of economic cooperation with China that can level the playing field,” he said. “It is strongly in the interests of both countries to build a relationship that is stable, sustainable, and the source of greater peace and prosperity.”



## U.S. WARNING SYSTEM IMPROVES FORECASTS FOR EXCESSIVE HEAT

Excessive heat warning program is becoming worldwide model

Because heat may be one of the greatest weather-related killers in many parts of the developed world, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is collaborating with cities around the world to expand heat warning systems.

According to a January 11 press release, NOAA's National Weather Service is expanding the number of Heat/Health Watch Warning Systems from 16 cities in the United States to every municipality with a population exceeding 500,000, and is helping other countries adapt the program for local conditions.

The potentially widespread health problems associated with heat waves have created a growing impetus to develop warning systems to allow urban health agencies and local meteorological offices to issue advisories to the public if a dangerous heat wave is imminent.

"This has led to an important collaboration to construct Heat/Health Watch Warning Systems for vulnerable large cities around the world," said Laurence Kalkstein of the University of Delaware Center for Climatic Research and developer of the new system.

The system measures oppressive air masses affecting health and is part of a national focus on the special hazards excessive heat has on urban centers.

Based on NOAA Weather Service storm data from 1994 to 2003, excessive heat is the number one weather-related killer, causing more fatalities per year than floods, lightning, tornadoes, hurricanes, winter storms and extreme cold.

"Philadelphia was the first city in the United States to implement the Heat/Health Warning System program and is now becoming the worldwide model for heat forecasting," said Gary Szatkowski, meteorologist-in-charge of the NOAA Weather Service forecast office in New Jersey.

According to Kalkstein, the Philadelphia program provided the model used in developing programs for Shanghai, China; Toronto, Canada; and six cities in Italy -- Rome, Palermo, Milan, Genoa, Bologna and Turin.

The full story with graphics is available at <http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2005/s2366.htm>

Information on NOAA heat safety is available at <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/heat/index.shtml>

A brochure about heat waves is available at <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/brochures/heatwave.pdf>